

CHAPTER X.

REFORMATION AND REVOLUTION IN THE NETHERLANDS —THE BEGINNINGS OF THE RELIGIOUS REVOLT.

IT was a fateful stroke that gave the Netherlands a ruler who was both a Habsburg and a Spaniard, and who became King of Spain and Emperor of Germany as well. Such was Duke Charles, son of Philip the Fair and Juana, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella. The connection with the imperial dynasty began under Maximilian, father of Philip; that with Spain began under Philip himself, who died at Burgos in 1506, a few months after he had assumed as king the government of Castile. From 1507 to 1515 his sister Margaret acted as regent of the Netherlands under Maximilian's supervision. Charles, who attained his majority in the latter year, had hardly ruled a twelvemonth over the Burgundian provinces when, in 1516, the death of Ferdinand made him in turn King of Spain. Three years later the suffrages of the electors made him emperor in succession to his grandfather Maximilian. The cares of his royal and imperial dignities henceforth absorbed most of his attention, and he ruled his hereditary Burgundian possessions through two women—his aunt Margaret, governess till 1530, and his sister Mary, the widowed Queen of Hungary, who acted as regent from 1530 to 1555.

The spirit of the autocrat was none the less felt in the government of the Netherlands. The policy of centralisation on the model of the modern monarchy was continued. To this end the administration was vested, by the reorganisation of 1531, in a Council of State and a new Privy Council. In the same year Charles augmented, too, the powers of the Great Council of Justice at Mechlin, which Philip the Fair had restored, though he did not succeed in bringing Brabant and some of the other provinces to submit to its general jurisdiction. He maintained a standing army which, though smaller